Shared Responsibility:

Final Report and Recommendations of the *Urban Aboriginal Initiative*

A Western Cities Project Report

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FOUNDATION

As used in this report, the term Aboriginal is meant to encompass all people who are descendants of the original inhabitants of what is today Canada.

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Executive Summary

Background

The importance of urban Aboriginal issues in the West is demonstrated in at least three ways by results from the 2001 Census. First, many Aboriginal issues are in reality urban issues as one-half of Canada's Aboriginal people live in urban areas. Second, urban Aboriginal issues are predominantly issues affecting western Canada, as nearly two-thirds of urban Aboriginal people live in the West. Third, the concentration of Aboriginal people in major urban areas of western Canada is rapidly increasing; for example, the proportion of Saskatoon's population that is Aboriginal increased by more than one-fifth in five years, from 7.5% in 1996 to 9.1% in 2001. The *Urban Aboriginal Initiative* identified key policy areas, explored policy options and alternatives, highlighted promising practice ideas, and promoted dialogue about urban Aboriginal issues. The *Final Report* is not a research study in its own right; rather, it is the culmination of two years of research, citizen engagement, and analysis, and summarizes the work undertaken on the *Urban Aboriginal Initiative,* the findings of those efforts, and presents recommendations on urban Aboriginal policy, programming, and research. The issues addressed by the *Final Report* are not limited to major cities in western Canada but are also present in every major city in Canada with significant Aboriginal populations, including Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, and Halifax. Indeed, smaller cities such as Prince Albert, Thunder Bay, Prince George, Sudbury, and Kamloops may benefit from the Initiative, as it provides policy lessons that can also apply to those cities.

Summary of Findings

The major findings of the *Urban Aboriginal Initiative* include:

- On a number of important indicators of personal and community well-being, many urban Aboriginal people in Calgary, Edmonton, Regina, Saskatoon, Vancouver, and Winnipeg face challenges well in excess of those of the non-Aboriginal urban population.
- No order of government is willing to assume primary responsibility for urban Aboriginal policy; however, disagreements over responsibility have not precluded substantial policy activity.
- At the time of the research, federal, provincial, and municipal governments had enhanced programming for urban Aboriginal people in several important fields; however, the programming was inconsistent.
- While the urban Aboriginal policy file continues to face challenges, there are numerous examples of success stories, policies that are working, effective approaches, and programs that make a positive difference in people's lives. In short, there are ideas that work – promising practices – from which others can learn.
- This is a policy environment where intergovernmental relations must be part of the solution because federal, provincial, and municipal governments are unavoidably engaged and entangled. However, intergovernmentalism will ultimately be unsuccessful unless urban Aboriginal people are engaged in the intergovernmental process.

Public Policy Recommendations

1. Federal and Provincial Governments Must Be in Urban Aboriginal Policy Together

Federal and provincial governments need to formally accept shared responsibility for urban Aboriginal policy, and institutionalize intergovernmental coordination and cooperation.

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2. Governments Must Set Goals and Evaluate Their Efforts

To reverse the effects of previous misguided public policies will take more than one generation, so governments should commit to long-term objectives. To meet those objectives requires establishing firm targets for closing the gap in life chances between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal urban residents. Evaluation is a vital aspect of policy-making and programming, and its absence in the urban Aboriginal context is noticeable. Therefore, comprehensive program and policy reviews need to be performed, with a focus on measuring outcomes rather than outputs

3. Governments Should Not Shy Away From Aboriginal Politics

The absence of consistent, effective urban Aboriginal voices in some settings will continue to impair both the public policy process and outcomes from that process unless governments encourage the development of representative urban Aboriginal organizations, and ensure that future urban Aboriginal leadership is fostered. Respect for diversity should take the form of policies and programming that have, when appropriate, specific cultural components for different Aboriginal nations. At the same time, programming should be status-blind – respectful of cultural distinctions among Aboriginal people while being available to all urban Aboriginal people.

4. Governments Need to Take Principled Approaches

Governments should adopt promising practices and use holistic approaches in policy and programming. Leadership by governments on the urban Aboriginal policy file can take many forms, but two in particular need to be considered: leadership through innovative approaches and leadership through public education.

5. Recommendations to Specific Orders of Government

The federal government should redirect a portion of its Aboriginal program spending from reserves to urban areas, especially major cities, and should improve the availability of Aboriginal data. Provincial governments should implement student registration systems. Municipal governments should avoid financing human services, should pressure federal and provincial governments for human service funding, and should conduct municipal censuses that allow people to self-identify as Aboriginal.

Recommendations for Further Research

While much has been learned through the *Urban Aboriginal Initiative* and other studies, more research needs to be completed. Governments need to research alternative accountability frameworks, ways to reward innovation, alternative funding mechanisms, migration and mobility patterns and causes, and acute challenges confronting urban Aboriginal communities. Governments also have to conduct cost-benefit analysis.

Methodology

The *Urban Aboriginal Initiative* consisted of a two-year process that included three components. First, a socio-economic comparison of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents of six major cities in western Canada and review of federal, provincial, and municipal government urban Aboriginal-specific policies in those cities. Second, an investigation of enhanced urban Aboriginal programming by federal, provincial, municipal, and Aboriginal governments, and by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal non-governmental organizations. Third, the identification and discussion of promising practices – ideas that work – in urban Aboriginal policy-making and programming. Throughout the two-year process, citizen engagement activities helped to inform the *Urban Aboriginal Initiative* and the *Final Report* is informed by the views of over 400 people involved in urban Aboriginal policy and programming.

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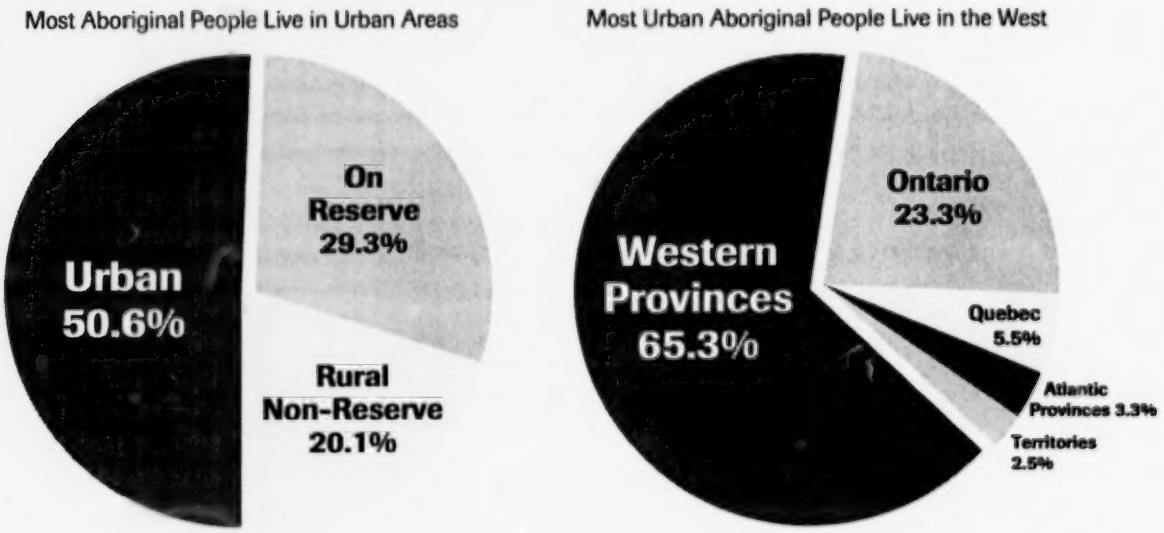
I. Introduction

Recognizing that the future of western Canada is inexorably tied to its major cities, in 2000 the Canada West Foundation launched the three-year **Western Cities Project,** an examination of the challenges, opportunities, and possible approaches to public policy issues facing western Canada's largest urban areas – Calgary, Edmonton, Regina, Saskatoon, Vancouver, and Winnipeg. The research agenda was informed by issue scans and in-depth interviews with mayors, community leaders, and others. One of the issues identified as requiring research was public policy as it relates to urban Aboriginal people in the major western Canadian cities. As a result, the two-year *Urban Aboriginal Initiative* was developed as one component of the **Western Cities Project.**

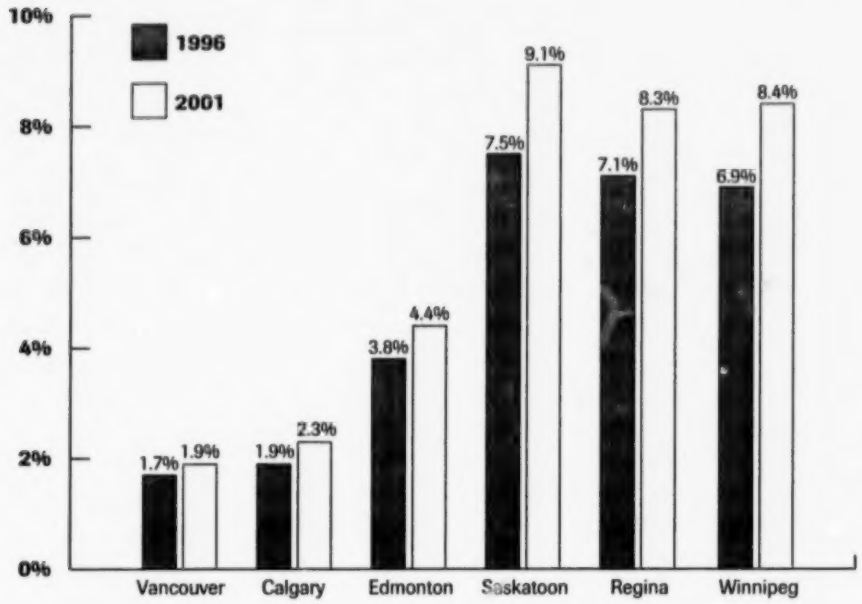
The importance of urban Aboriginal issues in the West is demonstrated in at least three ways by results from the 2001 Census. First, as Figure 1 illustrates, many Aboriginal issues are in reality urban issues as one-half of Canada's Aboriginal people live in urban areas, considerably more than live on Indian reserves. Second, urban Aboriginal issues are predominantly issues affecting western Canada, as Figure 1 also shows that nearly two-thirds of urban Aboriginal people live in the West.

Figure 1:
Distribution of the Aboriginal Population, 2001



Source: Derived by Canada West Foundation from 2001 Census data. These data are for the "Aboriginal Identity Population" and do not include incompletely enumerated Indian reserves or settlements. Statistics Canada defines the Aboriginal Identity Population as "those persons identifying with at least one Aboriginal group, i.e. North American Indian, Métis or Inuit (Eskimo), and/or those who reported being a Treaty Indian or Registered Indian as defined by the Indian Act of Canada and/or who were members of an Indian Band or First Nation" (Statistics Canada 2003b; 2003a).

Figure 2:
Aboriginal Proportion of Metropolitan Population, 1996 and 2001



Source: Derived by Canada West Foundation from Census data. These data are for the "Aboriginal Identity Population." Statistics Canada defines the Aboriginal Identity Population as "those persons identifying with at least one Aboriginal group, i.e. North American Indian, Métis or Inuit (Eskimo), and/or those who reported being a Treaty Indian or Registered Indian as defined by the Indian Act of Canada and/or who were members of an Indian Band or First Nation" (Statistics Canada 2003a).

Third, Figure 2 demonstrates that the concentration of Aboriginal people in major urban areas of western Canada is rapidly increasing; for example, the proportion of Saskatoon's population that is Aboriginal increased by more than one-fifth in five years, from 7.5% in 1996 to 9.1% in 2001.

Nonetheless, the issues addressed by the *Urban Aboriginal Initiative* are not limited to the six cities of the **Western Cities Project** but are also present in every major city in Canada with significant Aboriginal populations, including Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, and Halifax. Indeed, smaller cities such as Prince Albert, Thunder Bay, Prince George, Sudbury, and Kamloops may benefit from the *Initiative*, as it provides policy lessons that can also apply to those cities.

This *Final Report* is not a research study in its own right; rather, it is the culmination of two years of research, citizen engagement, and analysis, and summarizes the work undertaken on the *Urban Aboriginal Initiative*, the findings of those efforts, and presents recommendations on urban Aboriginal policy, programming, and research.

The Need For Inclusive Discussions

Discussions about urban Aboriginal policy need to be open to all Canadians; of that there can be neither doubt nor debate. First, it is important to have many voices speaking on urban Aboriginal policy issues, and these voices must transcend boundaries of origins or identity. Second, urban Aboriginal issues affect all Canadians who live in urban areas – their neighbours, Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, can either be contributors to the health and vitality of cities or live life at the margins of urban society. Third, the influence of urban Aboriginal issues goes far beyond the city limits to involve all Canadians because, to restate what is becoming axiomatic, cities are the engines of the new economy. Finally, as the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples argues, "Because Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people live as neighbours in urban areas, Canada's cities offer many chances for building bridges between cultures. We would like to see more Canadians initiate such activities" (RCAP 1996: 121). In short, urban Aboriginal issues are the legitimate concern of all Canadians because they have an effect on all Canadians.

The *Urban Aboriginal Initiative* is a good example of the benefits of an open discussion of urban Aboriginal policy. The *Initiative* represents the first time that the Canada West Foundation engaged in research on an Aboriginal policy issue. Canada West is aware that being Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal influences the way one views things, not necessarily skewing the work but nonetheless affecting one's research, analysis, and prescriptions. But Canada West is also acutely aware that – as western Canada's leading public policy research institute – it has an important and legitimate role to play in the discussion of urban Aboriginal policy.

II. Methods and Products

The objectives of the *Urban Aboriginal Initiative,* which commenced in January 2001, were:

- to identify the key challenges facing urban Aboriginal people, and to understand their implications for public policy;
- to highlight strategies and promising practices in addressing the needs of a growing urban Aboriginal population;
- to promote public awareness of the key issues facing both urban Aboriginal people and urban centres experiencing growing Aboriginal populations; and,
- to encourage federal, provincial, and municipal governments to work together with Aboriginal organizations to improve the quality of life for Aboriginal people living in major western Canadian cities.

To meet its objectives, the *Initiative* consisted of a two-year process that included three components. The methodology for the first component involved compiling and analyzing demographic and socio-economic data; reviewing existing public policy research studies; primary research of policy documents from federal, provincial, and municipal governments; telephone interviews with government officials; and verification of the policy findings by each government.

This phase resulted in *Urban Aboriginal People in Western Canada: Realities and Policies* (Hanselmann 2001), which provides a socio-economic comparison of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents of the six cities of the **Western Cities Project** and an

overview of federal, provincial, and municipal government urban Aboriginal-specific policies (explicit public expressions of approaches to addressing issues confronting urban Aboriginal people) in those cities.

The second component of the *Initiative* utilized a review of available documentation and directories; specific requests to relevant governments, Aboriginal Friendship Centres, and leading non-profit agencies in each city; Internet research; and submitting the findings to federal, provincial, and municipal governments for verification.

The outcome of that research is *Enhanced Urban Aboriginal Programming in Western Canada* (Hanselmann 2002a), which complements the first report by investigating urban Aboriginal programming in each of the six cities. The review covers enhanced urban Aboriginal programming (programming that provides urban Aboriginal people with consideration beyond that available to the general population) by federal, provincial, municipal, and Aboriginal governments, and by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal non-governmental organizations.

The methodology for the third component involved key informant telephone and in-person interviews with more than 100 representatives of federal, provincial, and municipal governments, school boards, health districts, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal service delivery organizations, and Aboriginal political organizations. Interviewees – over one-half of whom were Aboriginal people – were chosen using the network method and were asked to discuss initiatives that worked, and why these worked, for Aboriginal people in major western Canadian cities. Information from the interviews was supplemented by documents provided by interview subjects and other organizations, and by a review of relevant literature.

The third phase produced *Uncommon Sense: Promising Practices in Urban Aboriginal Policy-Making and Programming* (Hanselmann 2002b), an identification and discussion of 12 promising practices – ideas that work – in urban Aboriginal policy-making and programming.

Throughout the two-year process, citizen engagement activities helped to inform the *Urban Aboriginal Initiative* and this *Final Report* is informed by the views of over 400 people involved in urban Aboriginal policy and programming. In addition to more than 125 people who were interviewed (or otherwise provided information) during the *Initiative,* this report draws on the discussions and deliberations of 56 participants at the Canada West Foundation's *Metro West II* conference, and on comments received from approximately 300 participants at the six *Building the Dialogue* workshops.* The research and engagement activities of the *Initiative* included visits to Friendship Centres, community centres, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal service delivery agencies, Aboriginal political organizations, government departments, and numerous other locations.

The *Urban Aboriginal Initiative* benefited from an expert advisory committee, the members of which are listed on the inside front cover of this report. Members of the advisory committee supplied contacts, networks, references, information, and referrals; provided advice and guidance to project and research design; and reviewed drafts of the first three reports of the *Initiative.* However, members of the advisory committee have not reviewed this report and therefore should in no way be held responsible for the recommendations contained herein. The views expressed in this document are not necessarily held in full or in part by advisory committee members or their respective organizations.

* Both the *MetroWest II* conference and the *Building the Dialogue* workshops were Canada West Foundation events that, although not part of the *Urban Aboriginal Initiative,* provided valuable insights into urban Aboriginal issues. For information on *MetroWest II,* see Vander Ploeg 2002b. Information on *Building the Dialogue* can be found in the Appendix to this *Final Report.*

III. Summary of Findings

The major findings of the *Urban Aboriginal Initiative* include:

- The Aboriginal population of Canada is increasingly urban. One-half of the Aboriginal population of Canada live in urban areas, nearly two-thirds of whom are in western Canada.
- Aboriginal people are a visible presence in western Canada's major cities. People who reported Aboriginal identity on the 2001 Census comprised as much as 9.1% of the population of a metropolitan area, up significantly from a high of 7.5% in 1996.
- Urban Aboriginal people are not a homogeneous group. The Aboriginal population in any major city in western Canada represents a diverse sampling of Canada's three constitutionally recognized Aboriginal peoples – "the Indian, Inuit, and Métis people of Canada" (*Constitution Act, 1982* s. 35) – and many other Aboriginal people. Some urban Aboriginal people refer to themselves as members of First Nations, some (especially in Alberta) identify themselves as members of Métis Settlements, some have Status under the *Indian Act*, some assert Treaty rights, some identify with one or more Aboriginal nations, while others do not. The differences and distinctions are many, and they are real.
- Aboriginal people will play a large part in the future of western Canada's major cities. Aboriginal people have a much younger age structure than the general population and the urban Aboriginal labour force can play a prominent role in alleviating future shortages of skilled labour.
- Although the transition from rural and reserve areas to a major city can be much like immigrating to Canada from another country, the Government of Canada does not fund urban transition programs for Aboriginal people nearly to the extent that it funds transition programs for recent immigrants to Canada. Urban Aboriginal transition programming receives less than five cents for every dollar spent on immigrant settlement and transition.
- On a number of important indicators of personal and community well-being, many urban Aboriginal people in Calgary, Edmonton, Regina, Saskatoon, Vancouver, and Winnipeg face challenges well in excess of those of the non-Aboriginal urban population:
  - Aboriginal people tend to have lower educational levels, lower labour force participation rates, higher unemployment rates, and lower income levels.
  - Aboriginal people are more likely to be in lone parent families, have poorer health status, have higher rates of homelessness, and greater housing need.
  - Aboriginal people are over-represented in the criminal justice system – both as victims and as offenders – and are more likely to experience domestic violence.
- No order of government is willing to assume primary responsibility for urban Aboriginal policy; however, disagreements over responsibility have not precluded substantial policy activity.
- Federal, provincial, and municipal governments have urban Aboriginal-specific policies in several, but not all, important fields in western Canada's major cities. The policy landscape ranges from comprehensive government-wide frameworks, to departmental initiatives, to the absence of urban Aboriginal-specific policy.
- At the time of the research, some issues in which urban Aboriginal people exhibited acute levels of need did not have urban Aboriginal-specific policy. None of the governments had urban Aboriginal policies in the areas of family violence, childcare, addictions, or suicide.

- Fields in which large gaps appeared in the urban Aboriginal policy landscape are income support, human rights, housing, and urban transition.
- Several policy fields – including training, employment, homelessness, and justice – had policy overlaps among the orders of government, an indication of the relative importance placed on those fields by federal, provincial, and municipal governments.
- At the time of the research, federal, provincial, and municipal governments had enhanced programming for urban Aboriginal people in several important fields; however, the programming was inconsistent.
- In addition to their own program delivery, federal and provincial governments provide funding for enhanced programs offered by Aboriginal and non-profit organizations, and by municipal governments.
- No enhanced urban Aboriginal programming existed in income support or suicide, and almost none was available in the field of human rights.
- There is little relationship between urban Aboriginal-specific policies and enhanced urban Aboriginal programming in large western Canadian cities. In fewer than two-thirds of the cases in which policy statements existed was programming also identified; at the same time, of the instances in which programming was found, two-thirds did not have policies.
- There is insufficient awareness of available programming, which contributes to the challenges facing urban Aboriginal people attempting to access these programs.
- While the urban Aboriginal policy file continues to face challenges, there are numerous examples of success stories, policies that are working, effective approaches, and programs that make a positive difference in people's lives. In short, there are ideas that work – promising practices – from which others can learn.
- Six promising practices apply to everyone involved: Emphasizing and Building Social Capital, Cultivating the Right People, Keeping a Client Focus, Considering Service Location Carefully, Emphasizing Aboriginal Delivery, and Separating Politics from Program Delivery.
- Six promising practices for governments were identified: Listening to the Community, Approaching Issues Holistically, Allowing Flexibility, Simplifying Application Processes, Recognizing the Importance of Urban Aboriginal Issues, and Cooperating Nationally and Regionally.
- In many cities, urban Aboriginal people lack an effective voice with which to participate in designing and implementing policies and programs. The absence of this voice means that, unlike on most issues, governments do not have organized interests to represent stakeholders; this poses a difficult challenge for governments in addressing urban Aboriginal issues.
- This is a policy environment where intergovernmental relations must be part of the solution because federal, provincial, and municipal governments are unavoidably engaged and entangled. However, intergovernmentalism will ultimately be unsuccessful unless urban Aboriginal people are engaged in the intergovernmental process.
- Urban Aboriginal people, their circumstances, and their situations in each city are unique; there is, therefore, no one-size-fits-all solution to urban Aboriginal issues. "Cookie-cutter" directives from departmental headquarters will not work.
- Addressing urban Aboriginal issues will be a long-term process: there is no quick solution.

IV. Public Policy Recommendations

The two-year research, engagement, and analysis process that led to the major findings of the *Urban Aboriginal Initiative* points to the following recommendations for addressing some of the challenges in urban Aboriginal policy. While relevant to others engaged in urban Aboriginal policy, these recommendations are primarily intended for governments – because public policy is what governments choose to do or not to do. Although based on research and engagement in western Canadian cities, the recommendations are relevant to any city in Canada with a sizable Aboriginal population; indeed, many of the ideas can be applied to other Aboriginal policy files.

1. Federal and Provincial Governments Must Be In Urban Aboriginal Policy Together

Formally Accept Shared Responsibility for Urban Aboriginal Policy

The *Urban Aboriginal Initiative* found that intergovernmental disagreements over responsibility for urban Aboriginal policy were hindering progress. In brief, the federal government contends that it has primary responsibility with respect to First Nations people on-reserve while provincial governments have primary responsibility for all other Aboriginal people. Provincial governments, by contrast, have long held the position that *all* Aboriginal people are the primary responsibility of the federal government. Therefore, many urban Aboriginal policy challenges are largely the result of a jurisdictional issue that has been transplanted to the urban setting.

This disagreement has historically hindered public policy development with respect to urban Aboriginal people. In the past, neither federal nor provincial governments have been willing to act in this policy area for fear of being seen to be moving away from their political position. Rather, it has been much more expedient for governments to shrug and point their fingers at the other order than to accept responsibility.

More recently, however, movement has been observed. The *Urban Aboriginal Initiative* identified a considerable degree of policy and programming activity by both federal and provincial governments. Often, the most productive examples of government action are federal-provincial partnerships – sometimes with participation by others.

Nevertheless, jurisdictional squabbling continues, and continues to inhibit effective policy-making. Because neither order of government is willing to accept – and because neither wants its actions to be interpreted as a tacit acceptance of – primary responsibility with respect to urban Aboriginal people, they both hesitate to be as active in the area as they could and should be.

Some commentators have suggested that one or the other order of government accept primary responsibility for urban Aboriginal people. Suggestions range from, for example, the recommendation that the federal government accept responsibility for all Aboriginal people to the suggestion that the provinces "buy out" the federal role through a transfer of tax points. Neither alternative, however, is realistic because of the potential financial and political costs involved.

Therefore, federal and provincial governments must set aside their political posturing about responsibility for urban Aboriginal

people and recognize that there is a need for a shared role with respect to policy for urban Aboriginal people. The two orders of government must work in partnership with each other. The partnership will sometimes be loose and largely undefined; in some circumstances, other partners will have to be brought in. But in all cases, **it is imperative that federal and provincial governments formally accept that while neither has primary responsibility, both must share responsibility for urban Aboriginal policy.** The formal acceptance could take many forms, including Memoranda of Agreement, ministerial statements, legislation, and even constitutional amendment.

The practical and pragmatic basis for this recommendation is simple: the federal government cannot escape at least residual responsibility for the off-reserve Aboriginal population while provincial governments have social service obligations that must cover all provincial residents living off-reserve. Two advantages to formally accepting shared responsibility are most obvious. First, shared responsibility will diminish considerably the discrepancies in policy and programming levels among First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Status, non-Status, and so on. Second, if federal and provincial governments accept shared responsibility, both orders of government will contribute towards funding needed programs and projects. This may obviate the need to make more difficult but ultimately less meaningful policy options – such as repealing Status distinctions in the *Indian Act*. Repealing the Status distinctions in the *Indian Act* would be less meaningful because doing so will not necessarily eliminate discriminatory government practices – Métis people would still not be eligible for educational support from the federal government, for example.

Institutionalize Intergovernmental Coordination and Cooperation

Flowing from the historical lack of agreement over primary responsibility for urban Aboriginal policy has been a shortage of coordination and cooperation between federal and provincial governments. The *Urban Aboriginal Initiative* identified several instances of concurrent federal and provincial policies and programming in the same field. Often, these cases of overlap turned out not to be complementary but rather duplicative because federal and provincial governments were neither coordinating their policy efforts nor cooperating on programming. Policy and programming duplication is clearly wasteful and inefficient; in addition, duplication can be confusing and frustrating for potential clients.

Recent examples of intergovernmental coordination and cooperation are promising signs; however, it is necessary to have coordination and cooperation be the standard rather than the exception. Therefore, **federal and provincial governments need to institutionalize coordinating their efforts on the urban Aboriginal file.** The institutionalizing could take many forms, including regular ministerial meetings (beyond the current Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for Aboriginal Affairs and National Aboriginal Leaders (FPTA) meetings), regular meetings of senior officials, facilitating exchanges among regional and street-level officials, single-window delivery, and information clearinghouses. Further, and flowing from the previous recommendation for shared responsibility, **federal and provincial governments must cooperate in urban Aboriginal policy and programming.** This must be committed cooperation, not just "feel-good" statements about cooperating. That means commitments of resources, commitments to work together, commitments to dialogue with each other, and commitments to achieving common objectives.

Until such time as federal and provincial governments implement committed cooperation, an interim step would be open dialogue between governments. Currently, officials (elected and appointed) of each order of government hesitate from opening dialogues with their counterparts for fear of having the overture over-interpreted and being accused of implying some kind of commitment. This is absurd; federal and provincial governments should not shy away from discussing urban Aboriginal issues with each other. Officials should talk – openly and honestly – about urban Aboriginal issues, having first stated any boundaries that may exist for them.

2. Governments Must Set Goals and Evaluate Their Efforts

Commit to Long-term Objectives

The personal, family, and social ills plaguing some urban Aboriginal people are among the most intractable public policy challenges in Canada. However, action must be taken, difficult though it may be. Unfortunately, there is no quick fix to these challenges, as urban Aboriginal issues are multi-generational. A previous public policy – the residential schools system – destroyed the parenting skills of two generations of Aboriginal people; the current generation is the third to be affected. Reversing the effects of previous misguided public policies will also take more than one generation. Therefore, **federal and provincial governments should commit to a long-term objective of improved conditions among urban Aboriginal people.** Although it would be ideal to be able to achieve the goal sooner, **governments should acknowledge that the objective might take as long as three generations – 60 years – to accomplish.** The alternative to making – and keeping – such a commitment is for governments to continue to fund costly remedial services for increasingly large urban Aboriginal populations.

To achieve the long-term objective will require a change in the standard timelines adopted by governments. Programs and projects aimed at improved conditions among urban Aboriginal people cannot make adequate progress if they are operational for only a year or two. Rather, progress on urban Aboriginal issues requires resources over extended periods of time. Indeed, federal and provincial governments need to adopt longer time horizons and build long-term accomplishments with medium-term steps. Therefore, **project and program design should include timelines that extend for a minimum of five years,** with consideration for renewal periods.

Establish Firm Targets for Closing the Gap in Life Chances

Significant gaps exist between the socio-economic conditions of many urban Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. The Government of Canada has committed itself, in the 2002 *Speech From the Throne,* to work to "close the gap in life chances between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians" (Canada 2002). More specifically, "[t]he government will work with interested provinces to expand on existing pilot programs to meet the needs of Aboriginal people living in cities." However, while statements like these are commendable, they are not enough because they are often empty words, lacking in real substance. And while talk is usually cheap, on the urban Aboriginal file, it is anything but. Talk is not cheap because, while governments make hollow commitments, real costs are experienced. Hundreds of millions of dollars are spent without significant improvements in conditions facing many urban Aboriginal people while at the same time, the really tragic cost – wasted human lives – goes on uncounted. Therefore, governments must go beyond rhetoric. **Federal and provincial governments must establish firm targets that will close the gap in life chances for urban Aboriginal people.** That means publicly stating the measurements by which success

or failure will be determined. The statements must be in real terms, such as "The Government of Canada and Province of _____ commit to eliminate the unemployment rate gap (difference between unemployment rates for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people) for urban Aboriginal people in the City of _____ within ___ years." And the commitments must be met.

Perform Comprehensive Program and Policy Reviews With a Focus on Measuring Outcomes, Not Outputs

Improving the conditions that challenge many urban Aboriginal people is a long-term process that will require on-going commitments of resources, energy, and ideas; however, renewal of policies and programs must be based on evidence of effectiveness, efficacy, and/or efficiency. Although the *Urban Aboriginal Initiative* found a considerable degree of urban Aboriginal policies and programming, no comprehensive evaluation of those policies or programs exists. Evaluation is a vital aspect of policy-making and programming, and its absence in the urban Aboriginal context is noticeable. Therefore, **federal, provincial, and municipal governments – in cooperation with delivery agencies – should undertake comprehensive policy and program evaluations.** A separate evaluation should be conducted in each major city so that local distinctions do not get lost in the comprehensiveness of the review.

Two of the basic tools of policy and program evaluation are output measurement and outcome measurement. Output measurement reports activity or effort such as the number of clients served or the types of services provided; outcome measurement examines how the individual (or the community) has been impacted, or compares results against intended goals. The two measures are largely complementary and can be used in tandem, possibly with other measures, in evaluating urban Aboriginal policies and programs. Nonetheless, emphasizing outcomes is appropriate in urban Aboriginal policy and programming because the intent should be empowering people to improve their lives rather than amassing impressive-sounding but ineffective efforts. Therefore, **governments should utilize policy and program evaluation that emphasizes outcome measurement.**

One of the major reasons that comprehensive policy and program evaluations have not been completed is that much of the quantitative data required to perform such reviews do not exist. Therefore, to facilitate evaluations, **government and non-governmental delivery agencies need to collect, collate, and store the necessary data.** These data include, among others, information on costs, access, clients, and outcomes. In addition to retaining copies of the data, delivery agencies – both government and non-government – should share the data with the government departments that fund the programming, and consideration should be given to instituting public dissemination.

However, generating evaluations is only part of the task. In order for evaluations to be meaningful, the results must be communicated. Governments, service providers, urban Aboriginal communities, and the public need to know whether or not a policy or program should be continued, redesigned, or terminated. Therefore, **dissemination and communication of evaluations should be built into proposals and funded accordingly.** Communicating the results of evaluations can aid in validating successful efforts that have gone before, generating support among senior public servants and politicians, and encouraging further resources, energy, and ideas.

3. Governments Should Not Shy Away From Aboriginal Politics

Leadership Development

Urban Aboriginal policy will inevitably be forged in an intergovernmental context. As such, the absence of consistent, effective urban Aboriginal voices in some settings will continue to impair both the public policy process and outcomes from that process. Therefore, **governments need to encourage the development of representative urban Aboriginal organizations.**

The future leaders of urban Aboriginal organizations are the children and youth of today. In urban Aboriginal communities – as with all communities – a real need exists for leaders with skills, knowledge, and capacity to take on the challenges of their communities. As the urban Aboriginal population increases in both absolute and relative size in western Canadian cities, the need for leadership will be ever more acute. Therefore, **governments need to ensure that future urban Aboriginal leadership is fostered.**

Respect Diversity While Not Discriminating

Urban Aboriginal people are far from being a homogeneous group. Within a major city there could be members of several First Nations, members of the Métis nation, Inuit, and other people with Aboriginal roots but who do not identify with a specific nation. It is important to recognize and respect the diversity among urban Aboriginal populations. However, the challenges confronting Aboriginal people in major cities are often the same, whether the person is, for example, Cree, Ojibway, Haida, Métis, or does not identify with an Aboriginal nation.

Respect for diversity should therefore take the form of policies and programming that have, when appropriate, specific cultural components for different Aboriginal nations. At the same time, governments should ensure that no urban Aboriginal person is denied access to urban Aboriginal programming. Therefore, **programming should be status-blind – respectful of cultural distinctions among Aboriginal people while being available to all urban Aboriginal people.** In this regard, it is important to remind readers that status-blind programming does not imply identity-blind, in which all Aboriginal people are lumped together without regard for cultural distinctions among Aboriginal people in urban communities.

Work With Those Who Are Willing to Work Together

One of the often-sad truths for urban Aboriginal people is the reality of Aboriginal politics. Too many Aboriginal leaders thrive on divisiveness, partitioning urban Aboriginal communities along political lines. This frequently takes the form of insisting that policies and programs be limited to particular Aboriginal people. Most often, however, it is characterized by demands for exclusive identity-specific (First Nations, Métis, Inuit) funding, policies, and programming. Stemming from this posturing is an all-too-frequent refusal to work with other Aboriginal groups on common issues.

Exclusive identity-specific funding, policies, and programming can mean unnecessary and expensive duplication, and working with one identity-specific group at a time can lead to many complications and negative outcomes. For these reasons, it would be counter-productive for governments to reward uncooperative behaviour. If an organization is not willing to work with others on

common issues, governments should leave that group out of the process and work with those that are so willing. In the short term, this will mean lost opportunities for some urban Aboriginal people, but when the organization is ready to cooperate it should then be engaged.

Therefore, **federal and provincial governments should work with Aboriginal political organizations that are willing to work with one another on urban issues.** This is not to argue that urban Aboriginal people must choose a single voice to speak for themselves, as doing so would be hypocritical: federal, provincial, and municipal governments rarely speak with a single voice. Indeed, examples of successful urban Aboriginal policy-making and programming often include more than one Aboriginal voice. The point is that governments should encourage and reward cooperation.

4. Governments Need to Take Principled Approaches

Adopt Promising Practices

The *Urban Aboriginal Initiative* identified 12 promising practices in urban Aboriginal policy-making and programming (see page 13). These promising practices – or ideas that work – were distilled primarily from interviews with over 100 people involved in urban Aboriginal policy and programming. All of the promising practices came from the practical experiences of the interviewees; as such, other promising practices no doubt exist. Some have been incorporated into recommendations in this report, and various governments are using some in urban Aboriginal policy-making and programming. However, although this is a good start, it does not go far enough. Therefore, additional promising practices should be identified. At the same time, **governments should adopt promising practices that are appropriate to achieving their urban Aboriginal policy goals, communicate the promising practices to public servants and others involved in urban Aboriginal policy-making and programming, and ensure that local officials and communities are empowered to select and apply promising practices that are relevant to local circumstances.**

Use Holistic Approaches

Over the course of the *Urban Aboriginal Initiative*, it has become apparent that piecemeal, single-issue approaches are not succeeding. To improve the conditions challenging many urban Aboriginal people, **governments need to adopt holistic approaches** that focus simultaneously on the person, the family, and the community, and that address more than one key issue at a time.

A "whole family" approach is one way to address urban Aboriginal issues in a holistic manner. This involves providing required supports for the entire family unit so that the family member who is seeking to improve herself or himself – through, for example, education, training, or employment – can concentrate on that task rather than a possibly disruptive or unstable home environment. Specific supports that may be required include childcare, income support, life skills counselling, domestic violence counselling, and substance abuse counselling. Therefore, **governments should attempt whole family approaches to self-improvement programming.**

Another variant on the holistic approach is to focus the resources of many departments and governments on one area of a city. The most seriously challenged urban Aboriginal people tend to be concentrated in certain core neighbourhoods of major cities.

Promising Practices

Twelve promising practices are discussed in *Uncommon Sense* (Hanselmann 2002b). Readers should be aware of two important qualifications with respect to these promising practices. First, some of the ideas may seem to contradict each other or to be at cross-purposes. This is because not all of these ideas are applicable to every situation. It is for those involved to apply the relevant promising practices to the circumstances they face. Second, these were not recommendations; rather, they were and remain Canada West's observations of what people said are ideas that work. To summarize, the 12 promising practices identified by Canada West are:

Recognizing the Importance of Urban Aboriginal Issues – Governments should reorganize their structures to place greater emphasis on Aboriginal issues, including urban Aboriginal issues. Policy frameworks that guide departments in addressing Aboriginal issues are another way in which governments can recognize the importance of urban Aboriginal issues.

Cooperating Nationally and Regionally – Regularly scheduled meetings of federal, provincial, and municipal officials need to occur. Ways around jurisdictional entanglements – including multipartite agreements involving combinations of federal, provincial, municipal, and Aboriginal organizations – should be encouraged.

Emphasizing and Building Social Capital – Successful policy-making and programming requires trust among participants, trust that is built over time through relationships and networks.

Listening to the Community – Community development approaches and engaging urban Aboriginal communities as partners are necessary because communities often know the issues better than public servants or politicians. Aboriginal community leaders should be valued by public servants for their experience and knowledge, and considered as peers rather than as clients.

Separating Politics from Program Delivery – Governments and Aboriginal organizations should work at keeping political roles separated from service delivery roles. Public servants and elected officials need to work with Aboriginal politicians on political matters, and with the service delivery community on programs.

Approaching Issues Holistically – Governments need to break down the silos that exist in structures and processes. Departments and orders of government need to partner with each other and with other sectors of society, and adopt a "common bowl" approach (in which everyone puts in what they can and takes out what they need) to addressing issues.

Cultivating the Right People – Support from all levels of an organization, especially among high level politicians and administrators, is critical to success. Local people are best positioned to inform policy-making and programming, and participants need to focus on the future, not the past, in discussing initiatives.

Keeping a Client Focus – Improved outcomes are the goals of urban Aboriginal policy-making and programming, and all actors must develop this common vision. To this end, cultural sensitivity – understanding the role of history in shaping urban Aboriginal realities today – and status-blind programming (programs available to everyone) are important.

Allowing Flexibility – Flexibility in policy implementation and program design is important, and community-designed programs often work better than "cookie-cutter" programs originating in departmental headquarters. Governments should encourage flexible administrative requirements, discretionary funding, and public servants thinking "outside the box."

Simplifying Application Processes – Community-based organizations often require assistance in completing applications for programming funding. Public servants need to spend time in the community, meeting with clients, providing training on completing applications, and reviewing applications early in the process.

Considering Service Location Carefully – Services should be located in the neighbourhoods in which clients reside, which may sometimes require a network of service locations. One stop shopping in street-level, storefront operations is preferred.

Emphasizing Aboriginal Delivery – Urban Aboriginal programming works better when delivered by Aboriginal people, but non-Aboriginal organizations can provide services to Aboriginal people when done so in an appropriate fashion and with Aboriginal workers.

Governments, however, often do not recognize this reality and insist on citywide approaches that result in inadequate resources being available to the most in-need neighbourhoods. Therefore, rather than scattering finite resources across an entire city, **governments should concentrate their efforts on specific neighbourhoods.**

Some urban Aboriginal people have multiple challenges in their lives and need support in several areas at the same time. Priority areas mentioned most often during the *Urban Aboriginal Initiative* include urban transition, housing, children and youth, education, labour force development, and childcare. A third holistic approach, then, is to address more than one issue at a time. One example of this approach would be a multi-year project in which urban Aboriginal people receive adult education to earn their high school equivalency, are then trained in construction trades, are later employed in constructing housing, and are then eligible for the residential units. This approach would meet immediate education needs, short-term training needs, middle-term employment needs, and long-term housing needs. In addition, the combined outcomes would prepare project participants to engage in the labour force for decades. In short, this approach would address several challenges in the clients' lives. Therefore, **governments should use approaches that address several issues simultaneously.**

Take Leadership Roles

Leadership by governments on the urban Aboriginal policy file can take many forms, but two in particular need to be considered: leadership through innovation and leadership through education. Urban Aboriginal issues are fraught with potential hazards for governments, but excessive caution and incrementalism will exacerbate the challenges facing many urban Aboriginal people. In this regard, small-scale pilot projects allow governments to experiment with innovative approaches without excessive financial or political risks. Although the results of these projects will be small and will take time, like compound interest, they will accrue. In this context, when governments attempt small, innovative projects they are not being limited by incrementalism but rather are actually being leaders through their approaches. Therefore, **governments should lead through innovative approaches to urban Aboriginal policy and programming.**

A second form of leadership that needs to be considered is through education. Too many Canadians are unaware of the contributions made by urban Aboriginal people, of the challenges confronting many urban Aboriginal people, and of the historical causes of some of those challenges. Governments need to lead the way in educating residents of major western Canadian cities to view urban Aboriginal people as assets, not liabilities, as opportunities, not costs. Therefore, **governments need to lead by implementing education campaigns to improve the level of understanding about urban Aboriginal people among the general public.**

5. Recommendations to Specific Orders of Government

The division of responsibilities among orders of government in Canada has rarely, in practice, been uncomplicated. In urban settings, the distinctions are even more confusing. Recognizing the intergovernmental imperative that exists on the urban Aboriginal policy file, previous recommendations in this *Final Report* have spoken simultaneously to two or more orders of government. The following recommendations, however, are directed to individual orders of government.

The Federal Government Should Redirect a Portion of Aboriginal Program Spending

Federal government spending on Aboriginal programming is inordinately skewed to Indian reserves even though the distribution of Aboriginal people is increasingly weighted towards urban areas. In the 2002 Budget year, 88% of all federal government Aboriginal program spending was directed toward Status Indians on-reserve while urban-specific programming amounted to a mere 3.5%. By way of contrast, while 29% of Aboriginal people lived on reserves in both 1996 and 2001, the urban share went up from 49% to 51%, with major metropolitan areas alone accounting for 28% in 1996 and 29% in 2001. Clearly, federal government spending on Aboriginal people should reflect population data. Even allowing for a large portion of on-reserve spending going to providing the sorts of infrastructure and services that in urban settings are provided by municipal and provincial governments, the discrepancy is obvious. Therefore, **the Government of Canada should redirect a portion of its Aboriginal program spending from reserve to urban areas, especially major cities.**

The Federal Government Should Improve Availability of Aboriginal Data

Socio-economic data on the Aboriginal population of Canada from the Census of Population and Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS) are not available until several years after the surveys are conducted. At the same time, Statistics Canada does not include Aboriginal identifier questions in many of the more-frequently administered surveys that it conducts, such as the Labour Force Survey. Because Census and APS data are unavailable in a timely fashion and more frequent Statistics Canada surveys do not provide data specific to the Aboriginal population of Canada, at least two negative repercussions occur. First, decision makers are forced to make decisions based on dated information – data that are as much as eight years old. Second, program impact assessments have to wait years before being completed – meaning, in some cases, that the program has already been terminated before its effectiveness is known. Therefore, **Statistics Canada should improve the timeliness of its releases of Aboriginal data from the Census of Population and Aboriginal Peoples Survey.** In addition, **Statistics Canada should include in its surveys questions that allow respondents to self-identify as having Aboriginal origins and/or identity.** To facilitate Statistics Canada's efforts, **the Government of Canada should ensure that Statistics Canada receives adequate financial resources.** Ideally, and to assist in educating Canadians, Statistics Canada would make all of its Aboriginal data publically available at no charge.

Provincial Governments Should Implement Student Registration Systems

One area of incomplete knowledge about urban Aboriginal people in western Canada – indeed, about all western Canadians – is with respect to education. No provincial government currently has a registration system that allows longitudinal studies of educational outcomes. The absence of this information means that decision makers cannot adequately assess the efficacy of existing programming. Therefore, **provincial ministries of education should implement a registration system for all students in their primary, secondary, and post-secondary systems.** Each student should be issued a unique identifier that, similar to the Social Insurance Number, is used for life. Any time a student registers for an educational program – at any level – the identifier would be reported. In addition, **provincial ministries of education should include within their education registration systems questions that allow respondents to self-identify as having Aboriginal origins and/or identity.** The information gathered will allow for evaluating educational outcomes among students, including urban Aboriginal students, and contribute to improved education programming. Ideally, the western provinces would cooperate so that interprovincial outcomes could also be determined.

Municipal Governments Should Avoid Financing Human Services

A distinction can be drawn between the services that cities should be providing out of their own-source revenues and those that cities should not. The main source of self-generated revenue for major western Canadian cities is the property tax. However, most analysts argue that the property tax is best suited to providing services to property while other forms of taxation – such as consumption and income taxes – have natures that make them more suitable for financing human services. Therefore, **cities should avoid funding human services out of their own-source revenues.** This is not the same as avoiding being involved in delivering human services; rather, it is a need to realize that, with limited financial resources, cities cannot be all things to all people – at least not without financial support.

Municipal Governments Should Pressure Federal and Provincial Governments for Human Service Funding

When federal and provincial governments have shirked their responsibilities to provide adequate resources to address human services needs, it has fallen to the cities to provide the services. This is a simple truth: if residents of a city cannot access adequate services, it is City Hall that often must deal with the consequences. However, cities need not simply accept this off-loading. Vander Ploeg identifies several strategies that a city could adopt in attempting to avoid finding itself shouldering the load for human services, among which is lobbying activities (2002a, 4). Recognizing that it is the responsibility of federal and provincial governments to fund human services, **cities should pressure federal and provincial governments to ensure that human services are adequately resourced by the appropriate orders of government.**

Municipal Governments Should Conduct Municipal Censuses

The quinquennial census conducted by Statistics Canada does not provide timely data to inform decision makers. In addition, municipalities require some additional information that the national census does not provide. These data can assist municipal decision makers in their planning and programming, and in pressuring federal and provincial governments for adequate resources. Therefore, **the municipal government in each of the major western Canadian cities should conduct its own annual census of population,** as several do already. Federal, provincial, and Aboriginal governments should be consulted in the census design and implementation, and federal and provincial governments should be pressured to assist with the costs of conducting the census. The census should include questions that allow respondents to self-identify as having Aboriginal origins and/or identity. In addition, **municipalities that currently conduct their own censuses should revise the questionnaire to include questions that allow respondents to self-identify as having Aboriginal origins and/or identity.** The results of these municipal censuses would greatly enhance the availability and utility of population data, including demographic data with respect to urban Aboriginal people.

V. Recommendations for Further Research

It is often said that Aboriginal people have been "studied to death," but without research findings it is difficult to persuade decision-makers of either the importance of urban Aboriginal issues or the necessity to act. Therefore, while much has been learned through the *Urban Aboriginal Initiative* and other studies, more research needs to be completed.

Research Alternative Accountability Framework

Aboriginal people tend to approach issues in a holistic way and address causes rather than symptoms. Many governments are attempting similar approaches in their urban Aboriginal policies and programs. Indeed, many of the policies, programs, and projects that were identified to the *Urban Aboriginal Initiative* as being successful involved some degree of horizontality or holism. However, this kind of innovative approach is much less common than it should be – largely because of traditional accountability requirements of Canadian governments.

Canadian governments are structured and operated in vertical silos: accountability and responsibility flow up and down within tightly mandated departments. However, to make horizontal or holistic approaches work requires resources from several departments, and frequently from several governments. It requires that money be transferred or pooled. And it therefore requires innovative accountability and responsibility frameworks.

Horizontal or holistic approaches to urban Aboriginal policy and programming will not become commonplace unless and until alternative but still effective accountability and responsibility frameworks are developed and institutionalized. Therefore, as a precursor to broader implementation of horizontal or holistic approaches, **research should be commissioned into accountability frameworks that can facilitate non-traditional approaches while respecting the traditional requirements of responsible government.**

Research Ways to Reward Innovation

The traditional institutional structures and organizational cultures of Canadian governments hinder effective urban Aboriginal policies and programs. Silo structures and processes inhibit flexibility, but imperatives such as "don't violate Treasury Board rules" and "don't embarrass the Minister or the department" also contribute greatly to a culture that discourages innovation and taking risks, no matter how calculated they might be. However, effective urban Aboriginal policy and programming require innovative approaches.

Therefore, **research should be commissioned into ways in which public servants can be rewarded, rather than punished, for program innovation.** Public servants must be encouraged to innovate, while remaining accountable for their actions. This is not recommending that public servants be allowed to make up policy as they wish. There is still a need for bureaucratic accountability and ministerial responsibility. However, the message from above must be that making a mistake will not endanger the career of an innovator. If the culture of risk-aversion is not overcome, urban Aboriginal policies and programs will continue to be much more static and much less effective than should be the case. And results will not come.

Research Alternative Funding Mechanisms

Federal, provincial, and municipal governments have reportedly been withdrawing much of the capacity-building financial support that they formerly provided Aboriginal organizations. Many service delivery organizations argue they are unable to fully engage in, for example, applying for project funding, providing service delivery, monitoring and reporting outcomes, and participating in evaluations. As well, many Aboriginal political organizations say they are hindered when attempting, for example, to participate

in political activities or engage in the policy-making process. One outcome of this challenge is that many Aboriginal political organizations have been moving into service delivery as a self-preservation strategy. This is unfortunate and should be avoided for at least two reasons. First, political organizations usually do not have the expertise to deliver services, and programming outcomes suffer as a result. Second, when political organizations move into service delivery, they can crowd out agencies with the requisite skills – again, harming client outcomes.

The need for capacity building among Aboriginal organizations – both service delivery and political – is not going to diminish; rather, it will increase as urban Aboriginal populations grow in absolute and relative terms. The need for financial resources will also increase as urban Aboriginal organizations become more involved with federal, provincial, and municipal governments. Therefore, **research should be commissioned into alternative funding mechanisms for urban Aboriginal organizations.** This research should consider, among the options identified, an examination of own-source revenues for urban Aboriginal political organizations. Until alternatives can be identified and implemented, federal and provincial governments could consider providing capacity-building resources to urban Aboriginal organizations to enhance their ability to engage in needed activities.

Research Migration and Mobility Patterns and Causes

Aboriginal people tend to have higher rates of mobility and migration than the general population. Very little is known, however, about the reasons Aboriginal people move – particularly to, from, and within cities. Therefore, **further research should be conducted into the migration and mobility of Aboriginal people.** This research should attempt to identify causes for migration and mobility, and should identify factors that make some Aboriginal people more inclined to mobility and migration.

Research Acute Challenges Confronting Urban Aboriginal Communities

Urban Aboriginal people tend to face particularly acute challenges compared to non-Aboriginal residents of major urban areas. Therefore, **further research is required into causes and remedies for specific challenges confronting many urban Aboriginal people and communities.** Examples of fields in which research is required include education, labour force development, housing and homelessness, criminalization, victimization, Aboriginal gangs, racism, and self-government.

Conduct Cost-Benefit Analysis

Earlier recommendations argued that federal and provincial governments should accept that they share responsibility for urban Aboriginal policy, and cooperate in policy and programming. However, these actions, if undertaken, will be almost meaningless unless adequate resources are committed. The Urban Aboriginal Strategy – the federal government's approach to partnering on this file – is under-resourced and under-funded, as are several provincial initiatives. Part of the reason for insufficient resources may be the difficulty in making a business case for putting money into urban Aboriginal issues. Therefore, **federal and provincial governments should commission research to estimate the costs and benefits of the status quo, and of investing significant resources into urban Aboriginal issues.** The results of this research should be disseminated widely and used in future decision-making.

VI. Conclusion

The *Urban Aboriginal Initiative* has been successful at achieving the objectives stated earlier in this *Final Report*. The *Initiative* identified key policy areas, explored policy options and alternatives, highlighted promising practice ideas, and promoted dialogue about urban Aboriginal issues. In so doing, the Canada West Foundation increased public awareness of those issues and encouraged constructive public policy debate. In particular, awareness of urban Aboriginal issues has been greatly enhanced, as the work of the *Initiative* generated news stories, opinion-editorials and columns, conference appearances and government briefings as well as being used in countless other forums. In addition, although the *Initiative* was not the only factor, federal, provincial, and municipal governments have taken some noteworthy steps forward. Since the *Urban Aboriginal Initiative* was launched:

- For the first time in history, urban Aboriginal people were mentioned in the Government of Canada's *Speech From the Throne*.
- Western provincial and territorial ministers requested, for the first time, that urban Aboriginal issues be placed on the official agenda for a meeting of Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for Aboriginal Affairs and National Aboriginal Leaders.
- Big City Mayors Caucus of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities committed itself to lobby the federal government for targeted urban Aboriginal funding.
- Western ministers with responsibilities for Aboriginal affairs met formally for the first time (Deputy Ministers held their own first formal meeting separately), the main agenda item being urban Aboriginal issues.
- Western Deputy Ministers wrote to federal counterparts suggesting cooperation and collaboration on urban Aboriginal issues.
- Saskatchewan launched a new handbook aimed at easing the transition for Aboriginal people moving to large urban centres.
- Urban Aboriginal issues were given prominence in the Interim Report of Prime Minister's Caucus Task Force on Urban Issues.

The *Urban Aboriginal Initiative* examined public policy – what governments choose to do or not to do – as it relates to Aboriginal people in western Canada's major cities. In so doing, the *Initiative* learned a great deal about the difficult circumstances facing too many Aboriginal residents of Calgary, Edmonton, Regina, Saskatoon, Vancouver, and Winnipeg. It also learned of some public policy shortcomings in those cities. Fortunately, the *Initiative* identified, as well, successful practices from which others can learn. The recommendations in this *Final Report* – the product of two years of research, engagement, and analysis – are intended to be one part of the solution to some of the most intractable issues confronting and confounding public policy practitioners in Canada.

The larger part of the solution, however, lies with urban Aboriginal people, the public, and governments. First, urban Aboriginal people must demonstrate their importance to the public and to governments. Relevance to the public – and by extension relevance to politicians and influence in the policy process – is often determined by population size and cohesiveness of message. When urban Aboriginal people speak as divided communities, make contradictory claims to representation, and insist that issues be addressed on the basis of First Nation, Métis, Inuit, Status, non-Status, and so on, they risk eroding their influence. Therefore, the political and public policy reality is that Aboriginal people within urban settings need to be willing to work together and emphasize what unites them as Aboriginal people rather than what divides them.

Second, the public must recognize that Aboriginal people are an important part of the life of western Canadian cities – and will take on greater importance in the future. Not all urban Aboriginal people are living life at the margins of urban society. Aboriginal people are contributing to western Canadian cities. But a greater contribution is possible, and the public needs to learn about urban Aboriginal issues so that it is aware that there is more than meets the eye to some of the formidable challenges confronting many urban Aboriginal people. And, armed with awareness, the public must pressure governments to act appropriately.

Finally, governments must respond to the importance of, and opportunities presented by, urban Aboriginal people. At present, many governments in Canada appear unwilling to commit the resources necessary to adequately address urban Aboriginal issues. While resource constraints and the need for compelling business cases play roles, budget allocations are inherently political decisions. Therefore, governments must take meaningful, constructive action on urban Aboriginal policy and programming.

All Canadians – especially urban Aboriginal people – need to work together to ensure that Aboriginal people are empowered to fully participate in and contribute to the health and vitality of our cities. This point has been made before – many times, in many ways, and in many forums. Although this time the medium is non-Aboriginal, numerous Aboriginal people in every major city in western Canada spoke the message: it is a shared responsibility.

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Appendix: Building the Dialogue

In part because *Uncommon Sense: Promising Practices in Urban Aboriginal Policy-Making and Programming* (Hanselmann 2002b), the third report of the *Urban Aboriginal Initiative*, contained positive messages that deserved broad dissemination, the Canada West Foundation undertook an aggressive communication strategy. Central to this strategy was *Building the Dialogue*, a series of morning workshops in each of the six cities of the **Western Cities Project.**

The workshops were designed to bring together individuals from governments, Aboriginal organizations, the non-profit and business sectors, as well as interested members of the general public, for constructive and positive community dialogues. Invitations were extended to people from all levels of these communities. Both elected and appointed officials were invited. In addition, the workshops were advertised through the Internet and through Public Service Announcements in the media.

The Privy Council Office of the Government of Canada, British Columbia Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services, Alberta Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, Saskatchewan Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs, and Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs enthusiastically partnered with Canada West, providing key financial and logistical support. This support allowed participation in the workshops to be open to anyone interested.

Building the Dialogue was not a component of the *Urban Aboriginal Initiative;* rather, it was a communication and citizen engagement undertaking that was in addition, yet contributed, to the *Initiative*. The goal was to contribute to sustainable community dialogues around the positive messages contained in *Uncommon Sense*. The format for each workshop included an Opening Prayer, introductions, a presentation about Promising Practices, small group discussions, reporting back, and a Closing Prayer.

Over 300 people, many of whom were Aboriginal, participated. Participants represented a broad cross-section of people active in urban Aboriginal policy and programming: Aboriginal community leaders, managers of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations, community workers, client service officers, a Mayor, a Deputy Mayor, City Councillors, MLAs, a Deputy Minister, several Assistant Deputy Ministers, other senior officials from federal, provincial, municipal, and Aboriginal governments, and other people who deal on a daily basis with the realities of urban Aboriginal life.

A variety of views were put forward during the small group discussions. Although the results of each discussion were unique, the following is a very brief summary of some themes that emerged fairly consistently. These views are not necessarily shared by all participants, the author, or the Canada West Foundation.

Specific Issues

- Youth, education, and labour force development are important; focus needs to be on children.
- Programming needs to look at and engage the entire family unit; urban Aboriginal development, economic development, and community development are all intertwined.

Communications

- Have to recognize achievements that have been made; communicate successes to encourage more successes.
- Need to change public perceptions; communicate the view that urban Aboriginal people are opportunities not problems: improving the quality of life for urban Aboriginal people leads to improved quality of life for all urban residents.

Constraints

- There is a need to remove barriers to sensible programming that meets needs; necessary to find ways around rigidities in government frameworks, especially vertical accountability.
- Need to develop accountability frameworks for when different organizations pool resources; need community-based accountability frameworks.

Inclusive Policy-Making

- Need to ensure community ownership of projects and programs; need for Aboriginal community to drive the process by starting with a small project immediately.
- Need to respect Aboriginal input into priorities and processes.

Political Voice

- Need leadership by urban Aboriginal people so they talk to each other; in some settings, urban Aboriginal people need to form one organization that would get to all issues with one voice while in other settings, a number of voices are preferred.
- Governments need to speak government to government with Aboriginal political organizations; the obstacle is representation.

Timelines

- Need to adopt long-term strategy; need to use long-term strategic planning and thinking to avoid more costly services to Aboriginal people in future; need to build long-term accomplishments with small steps.
- Re-invest in things that work well; keep the rules consistent rather than year-to-year budgets or three-year business plans or four-five year electoral cycles.

Capacity

- There is a need to enhance the capacity of Aboriginal organizations.
- More resources for capacity building are required.

Diversity

- Governments need to recognize and respect diversity among urban Aboriginal populations.
- Need to ensure that a diversity of voices is being heard.

Do What You Say You Will Do

- Sometimes policy exists but is not carried out; need to carry out policy in the community; need to follow-through on policy statements with service delivery and implementation; policy must be resourced from the highest levels so economic commitment matches the political rhetoric.
- Need policy that is durable and that can withstand a change in governing party rather than being terminated after an election, otherwise there may be a terrible step backward when the Government changes.

Deliverables

- Need to have consequences associated with not delivering on initiatives, so that everyone knows what will happen if the job doesn't get done.
- Need to include relationship building and networking in public servant work plans and performance evaluations.

Holism

- Governments need to devolve holistically – many departments simultaneously – rather than one department at a time.
- Policy coherence requires cross-departmental, not vertical, approaches.

Measuring Outcomes

- Need to focus on realistic outcome measures: individuals, not large numbers.
- Need to show how outcomes justify expenditures and longer timeframes; need to find ways to measure outcome of coming together to build relationships.

Reducing Barriers

- Need to deliver services based on need, not Status; reduce jurisdictional barriers to services so same services available to First Nations, Treaty, Inuit, Métis, etc.
- Eliminate the artificial distinction between urban Aboriginal and on-reserve; funding for Treaty First Nations should follow them off of the reserve, including into the city.

Cooperation

- There is a need for cooperation among governments at all levels.
- Aboriginal organizations must cooperate, share resources, communicate, and share information.

Building the Dialogue was extremely successful. The workshops witnessed sure signs that networking and dialogue were occurring and would continue, from the difficulty experienced in encouraging participants to break up their informal conversations and return to their seats following the mid-morning break, to the exchange of business cards and continuation of conversations following the conclusion of events, to a request to have Canada West distribute contact information for participants, to every participant in Regina responding favourably to a call from the Deputy Minister of Saskatchewan Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs for institutionalising meetings with a similar purpose. In addition, the tone of all media coverage of *Building the Dialogue* was positive. Lastly, the discussions helped to inform this *Final Report*.